REMARKS

A. Introduction

Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended during the interview conducted on March 5, 2008. The interview clarified several issues and enabled Applicant to better focus the present Amendment to expedite allowance of the present application.

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of this application. Claims 1, 2, 5-10, 13-16 and 18-24 are pending in the application. While Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's reasons for rejecting Claims 4, 12 and 17, Applicant has nevertheless canceled these claims without prejudice in order to expedite the allowance of the remaining claims. Applicant reserves the right to pursue canceled claims, and other claims, in continuing applications.

Applicant has amended Claims 1, 9 and 15, and Applicant has added new Claims 18-24. Applicant's claim amendments and claim additions are shown on the pages above following the heading AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS. On these pages, the deletions are ~~struckthrough~~ or [[double bracketed]] while the insertions are underlined.

Applicant submits that this application is now in condition for allowance, and Applicant earnestly requests such action. Below, Applicant addresses each of the Examiner's reasons for rejection.

B. All Claims are Patentable Over the Cited References

Kuras - § 102 Rejections

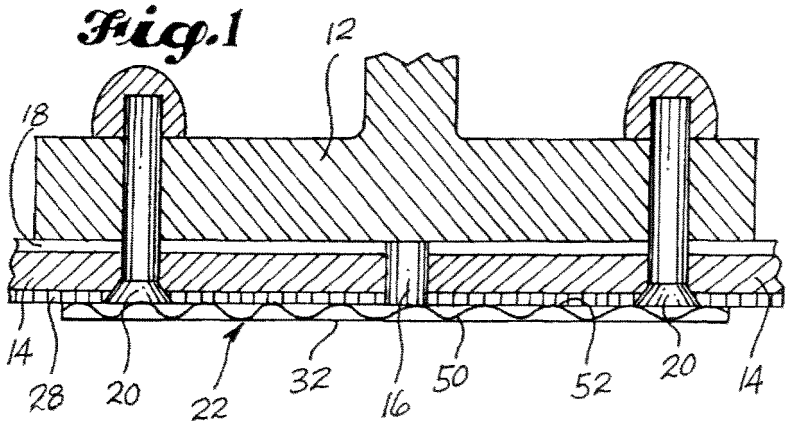
The Examiner rejected Claims 1, 2, 4, 7-10, 12 and 15-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,698,316 to Kuras et al. ("Kuras"). While Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner's reasons for rejecting Claims 4, 12 and 17, Applicant has nevertheless canceled these claims without prejudice as detailed above. Applicant respectfully submits that the remaining claims, as amended, are allowable over Kuras.

An anticipation rejection under § 102 requires that "every element of the claimed invention must be identically shown in a single reference." *In re Bond*, 910 F.2d 831 (Fed. Cir. 1990). "There must be no difference between the claimed invention and the reference disclosure, as viewed by a person of ordinary skill in the field of the invention." *Scripps Clinic & Research Foundation v. Genentech, Inc.*, 927 F.2d 1565 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

Claims 1, 2, 7 and 8

Various preferred embodiments of the present application define, *inter alia*, apparatus for protecting a composite-body aircraft against damage from lightning strikes. The apparatus comprises an aircraft body including a plurality of composite panels. A plurality of electrically conductive splice plates are configured to join adjacent ones of the composite panels to one another at respective edges of the adjacent composite panels. The apparatus further comprises a plurality of electrically conductive straps, and a plurality of electrically conductive fasteners. The straps and the fasteners mechanically and electrically couple adjacent ends of the splice plates to one another such that the splice plates form a continuous, electrically conductive grid disposed on the exterior surface of the aircraft body.

By contrast, Kuras discloses an electrically conductive bridge formed over a non-conductive joint between two or more adjacent electrically conductive panels. With reference to Figure 1 of Kuras, two composite panels 14 are positioned adjacent one another with a gap 16 between. Electromagnetic shielding material 28 overlies the composite panels. The electromagnetic shielding material comprises a copper mesh. An electrically conductive bridge 22 overlies the junction of the composite panels. The bridge comprises heavier weight expanded copper mesh 32. See Kuras column 5, line 63 through column 6, line 20.



Kuras does not teach or suggest at least a plurality of electrically conductive splice plates configured to join adjacent composite panels to one another at respective edges of the adjacent composite panels, a plurality of electrically conductive straps, and a plurality of electrically conductive fasteners, wherein the straps and the fasteners mechanically and electrically couple adjacent ends of the splice plates to one another such that the splice plates form a continuous,

electrically conductive grid disposed on the exterior surface of the aircraft body. In the Office action mailed on December 26, 2007, the Examiner asserted that the heavier weight expanded copper mesh 32 comprises a splice plate. Even assuming, *arguendo* that the Examiner is correct, there is then no structure taught by Kuras that corresponds to Applicants' claimed electrically conductive straps. As claimed, Applicants' claimed splice plates, straps, and fasteners all cooperate to mechanically and electrically couple adjacent ends of the splice plates to one another such that the splice plates form a continuous, electrically conductive grid disposed on the exterior surface of the aircraft body. There is no structure in Kuras that satisfies these claim limitations.

Since Kuras does not teach or suggest apparatus for protecting a composite-body aircraft against damage from lightning strikes as recited in Claim 1, Applicant respectfully submits that independent Claim 1 is allowable over Kuras. Dependent Claims 2, 7 and 8, which include the features of independent Claim 1, recite additional features of particular advantage and utility. Moreover, these claims are allowable for substantially the same reasons presented above. Kuras does not teach or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 1, let alone the unique combinations of features recited by Claims 2, 7 and 8. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

Claims 9, 10 and 13-16

Various preferred embodiments of the present application define, *inter alia*, a method for protecting a composite-body aircraft against damage from lightning strikes. The method comprises coupling adjacent composite panels on an aircraft body to one another at respective edges of the adjacent composite panels using electrically conductive splice plates, electrically conductive straps and electrically conductive fasteners. The straps and the fasteners mechanically and electrically couple adjacent ends of the splice plates to one another such that the splice plates form a continuous, electrically conductive grid disposed on the exterior surface of the aircraft body.

Like Claim 1, Claim 9 recites electrically conductive splice plates, electrically conductive straps and electrically conductive fasteners, wherein the straps and the fasteners mechanically and electrically couple adjacent ends of the splice plates to one another such that the splice plates form a continuous, electrically conductive grid disposed on the exterior surface of the aircraft body. These limitations are similar to those of Claim 1 outlined above. Accordingly, Applicant

respectfully submits that Claim 9 is allowable over Kuras for substantially the same reasons as Claim 1. Dependent Claims 10 and 13-16, which include the features of independent Claim 9, recite additional features of particular advantage and utility. Moreover, these claims are allowable for substantially the same reasons presented above. Kuras does not teach or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 9, let alone the unique combinations of features recited by Claims 10 and 13-16. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

Kuras - § 103 Rejections

The Examiner rejected Claims 5 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kuras. Claim 5 depends from Claim 1, and therefore includes all of the limitations of Claim 1. Claim 13 depends from Claim 9, and therefore includes all of the limitations of Claim 9. Claims 1 and 9 are allowable over Kuras for the reasons provided above. Claims 5 and 13 are therefore also allowable over Kuras for at least the same reasons provided above, and on their own merit. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

Kuras in view of Sankrithi

The Examiner rejected Claims 6 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kuras in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,666,406 to Sankrithi et al. ("Sankrithi"). Claim 6 depends from Claim 1, and therefore includes all of the limitations of Claim 1. Claim 14 depends from Claim 9, and therefore includes all of the limitations of Claim 9. Claims 1 and 9 are allowable over Kuras for the reasons provided above. Claims 1 and 9 are also allowable over Kuras in view of Sankrithi, because Sankrithi neither teaches nor suggests the limitations of Claims 1 and 9 that are lacking in Kuras. Accordingly, Claims 6 and 14 are allowable for at least the same reasons provided above with respect to Claims 1 and 9, and Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw these rejections.

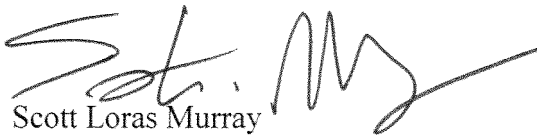
CONCLUSION

For the reasons presented above, Applicant respectfully submits that this application, as amended, is in condition for allowance. If there is any further hindrance to allowance of the pending claims, Applicant invites the Examiner to contact the undersigned.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1159.

Date: March 20, 2008

Respectfully submitted,



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